NPIC/TSSG/RED-1826-69
25 September 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Trip Report, Beale Air Force Base, Marysville, California on 15-16 September 1969

1. The purpose of this trip was to familiarize EXRAND members with the Air Force SR-71 Strategic Reconnaissance System. We were provided with extensive briefings by [redacted] and his staff and we toured most of the operational areas including the aircraft deployment facilities. One of the most interesting aspects of the SR-71 System is that it integrates the acquisition, processing, and interpretation functions, all of which are carried out under one centralized management control. Regardless of the success or failure of the SR-71 System, the benefits of this integration are evident. Since the specific attributes of the system are described in depth elsewhere, I will limit the following paragraphs to matters which I believe to be of special interest to us.

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2. Sensors.

a. Cameras. The aircraft is fitted with three types of cameras called the Terrain Objective, Operational Objective and Technical Objective cameras. The Terrain Objective and Operational Objective cameras are performing in accordance with the required specifications. The Operational Objective camera made by [redacted] is a panoramic type with a 13" focal length. Under ideal conditions it is achieving [redacted] ground resolution from operational altitude. The Technical Objective camera is a 48" focal length framing camera which has a performance specification of [redacted] ground resolution, but to date it has not exceeded [redacted] To me there is considerable evidence that this camera has been poorly conceived and should be replaced by a panoramic or scanning type. [redacted] and his staff appear to be committed to a course for attempting to improve this camera. I would hope that the lessons learned by the Agency and NPIC in this regard could be brought to their attention in such a way that they would appreciate the higher performance being attained by the panoramic or scanning system. I believe that our Reconnaissance System Branch could accomplish this communication.

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3. Overseas PI Centers (OPIC). [redacted] pointed out that the total integrated concept of the SR-71 System is not compatible with the OPIC System which calls for separation of the management of the acquisition, processing, and exploitation operations. They are strongly in favor of a revision of the OPIC concept. 25X1

4 Photo Lab The Beale Air Force Base Photo Lab is extensively outfitted with [redacted] Printers and [redacted] B&W and color processors. There is a long history of debugging for the [redacted] equipment. [redacted] who is in charge of the Photo Lab, indicated that they now have this equipment in an operational status but that it had been necessary for their own personnel to correct the equipment design due to the unsatisfactory working relationships with the contractor. In discussing their operations, we got the impression that the SR-71 effort was looked upon as somewhat of a stepchild by SAC and that there was only limited communication with the Westover Air Force Base operation. Consequently, I believe Beale is somewhat behind the times in image processing and evaluation technology. Somehow, I hope we can help close the gap in this area. Another problem noted by the photo lab is the color temperature of the light source on some of their film viewing tables, which causes their color film to appear unbalanced. 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

5. Rear Projection Viewer. The [redacted] Variscan Viewers at Beale are finding very little use in their readout operations. This is an evolution 25X1

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that has taken place at the choice of the interpreters. The Beale management is not convinced of the wisdom of this choice and is considering issuing a mandate requiring utilization of this equipment. They claim they have solved the reliability problems of the Variscan Viewer but here too extensive in-house efforts were required.

6. Map Projector. The SR-71 has a self-contained color strip map projection system which is used as a primary navigational aid. The strip maps are made up and photographed on 35 mm. film in their own photo lab. There may be some features about this system which would significantly relate to our own considerations for providing a map display device which would automatically coordinate the map presentation with the photographic pass being read out by the interpreter.

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7. Read-out Requirements [redacted] expressed deep concern over the problem of the lack of a satisfactory culling process for the target lists. He is convinced that there are extensive numbers of targets which are no longer significant but which remain in the target list because no effective means for reviewing their significance is being utilized. A similar problem exists at NPIC. The extent and importance of this problem indicates that this is a matter of prime importance for the attention of intelligence community managers.

8. Project "Scrapbook". This is the code word for two volumes available in the NPIC library which display extensive examples of the imagery acquired by the SR-71 [redacted]

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[redacted]
Special Assistant for Plans and Applications, RED

Distribution:
1 - NPIC/TSSG
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